

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Powell:

I'm writing to urge you to support the proposed merger between EchoStar Communications and Hughes Electronics. I believe the merger holds tremendous potential for my company in Mt. Vernon, IL which sells EchoStar's DISH Network satellite TV service. The new company will offer a more attractive product to consumers, and this will mean more business for my company.

The majority of my customers are not able to subscribe to their local broadcast channels via satellite because they live in a small television market.

This is the case because DISH Network does not have sufficient spectrum to provide all local channels in every one of the country's 210 local television markets. Also, the FCC guidelines for what's local does not appear to be consistent between the cable and satellite companies. Our local cable company offers the St. Louis channels as our locals but the satellite companies can not. Communities as close as 12 miles from my store can offer St. Louis channels as locals via satellite. It is imperative that the playing field be made level. Only by giving the satellite companies the ability to mix and match 'local' broadcast, as the cable companies can will fair competition be a reality. Currently, EchoStar offers local broadcast channels in only 36 markets. The merger will allow the combined company to stop broadcasting more than 500 identical TV channels. This will increase capacity and allow the new company to serve all TV markets in the U.S. This will allow me to offer my customers a more competitive alternative to cable in the near future.

If the merger is approved, the new EchoStar will provide consumers in my area an affordable high speed Internet access service via satellite. There are a small number of customers in my area who do enjoy access to high-speed Internet access service via cable and DSL service. For them, this merger will result in increased competition in the broadband market, potentially driving down prices of DSL and cable providers. However, the majority of the homes, schools and businesses in my area are beyond the reach of cable and DSL wires. For these customers, the new EchoStar would be their only chance of getting an affordable high speed Internet service.

This merger will increase satellite TV's ability to respond competitively to the roll out of digital cable, forcing cable companies to respond in a variety of ways including accelerating their digital upgrades and extending their wires out to reach those customers they currently do not serve. The resulting expansion in digital capabilities across the board will increase competition generally, will drive hardware upgrades for consumers, and drive retail traffic and sales nationwide.

High Definition Television (HDTV) was supposed to be available to the American public today, but consumers are still waiting for broadcasters and cable operators to provide the service. EchoStar and Hughes have pledged to us

e some of the available spectrum to increase their HDTV channel offerings, more than tripling their current HDTV offerings. I am excited because greater availability of HDTV programming will translate into more sales opportunities for my HDTV televisions and related products.

Please support the merger between EchoStar Communications Corporation and Hughes Electronics. There are many benefits of the merger, but I believe that at most importantly, the new company will increase competition with cable and help hold down cable rate increases. These savings, in turn, will be passed along to customers, which will be good for my business.

Sincerely,

Ken Nelson
1306 Salem Road
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864